

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 1, 18, 22-35 and 37-40 are currently pending in this application as amended. By the present amendment, claims 1 and 22 have been amended. The amendment to Claim 1 is to recite that the grooves in the first cylinder are a plurality of circumferentially extending, closed peripheral grooves which are axially spaced apart from one another. This is clearly shown in Figures 3 and 4 of the drawings, as filed. Accordingly, Applicants submit that no new matter has been introduced into the application by these amendments.

CLAIM OBJECTIONS

Claim 22 was objected to due to a minor informality which has been corrected as noted above in accordance with the suggestion in the Action. Accordingly, withdrawal of the objection to claim 22 is respectfully requested.

CLAIM REJECTIONS – 35 U.S.C. §103

Claims 1, 20, 23, 25, 26, 28, 32-34 and 40 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 as unpatentable over the combination of EP 0 278 607 to Kateley, FR 2 816 802 to Noel and U.S. 2,610,634 to Beck. Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

As amended, claim 1 is directed to a leaf-stripping device which includes a suction blower and leaf-stripping tools arranged in front of the suction blower. The leaf-stripping tools include a first rotatable cylinder and a second rotatable cylinder, wherein the first and second rotatable cylinders are arranged substantially parallel to each other. The first rotatable cylinder is coupled to a drive motor and includes a plurality of circumferentially extending, closed peripheral grooves which are axially spaced apart from one another disposed thereon. The blower is configured for producing an air stream through the grooves for drawing leaves between the first rotatable cylinder and the second rotatable cylinder. The leaves are selectively pressed

between the first rotatable cylinder and the second rotatable cylinder in order to tear the leaves off the plants.

Kateley is cited as disclosing a leaf stripping device including the suction blower and leaf stripping tools arranged in front of the suction blower. The Action admits that Kateley does not disclose a leaf-stripping tool comprising first and second rotatable cylinders arranged substantially parallel to one another. Noel was cited as disclosing a leaf-stripping device having a leaf-stripping tool which includes first and second rotatable cylinders arranged substantially parallel to one another. However, there is no suggestion or disclosure of one of the rotatable cylinders which is coupled to the drive motor including a plurality of circumferentially extending, closed peripheral grooves which are axially spaced apart from one another disposed thereon. These are specifically shown in Figures 3 and 4 of the present application and provide the advantage of improved suction of leaves into the device according to the invention based on the channels formed circumferentially around the rollers so that the suction acts to draw the leaves into the space between the rollers. The Action admits that both Kateley and Noel fail to disclose rollers which include any peripheral grooves let alone rollers which include a plurality of circumferentially extending, closed peripheral grooves which are axially spaced apart.

Beck et al. is relied upon in the Action as disclosing a corn husker having first and second cylinders which are used for stripping husks from corn. The cylinders of the Beck corn husker include helical flutes (111) which extend both circumferentially and axially. While this may be sufficient for husking ears of corn which are dropped onto these rollers from an overhead conveyor (17), as shown in Figure 1 of Beck et al., it does not address the need for creating suction channels which extend from a suction blower located on one side of a set of first and second rotatable cylinders to draw in leaves located on an opposite side of the rotatable cylinders. Thus, even if the references cited in the Action were combinable as suggested, this would still not address the improved means for drawing leaves between two rotatable cylinders via suction through the circumferentially extending, closed peripheral grooves which are

axially spaced apart on the first rotatable cylinder of the present invention. Accordingly, withdrawal of the Section 103 rejection of claim 1 is respectfully requested.

Claims 20, 23, 25, 26, 28, 32-34 and 40 depend directly or indirectly from claim 1 and should be similarly patentable for the reasons noted above in connection with claim 1.

Claims 18, 24 and 29 were also rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 as unpatentable over the prior combination further in view of FR 2 417 932 to Bou. Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Claims 18, 24 and 29 depend from claim 1 and should be similarly patentable for the reasons noted above in connection with claim 1. Bou is cited as disclosing a leaf-stripping device having cylinders designed to separate foliage from a plant so that the fruits of the plant are not damaged. However, Bou does not address the deficiencies with respect to the previous combination as applied to claim 1 and accordingly, these claims should be similarly patentable over this combination for the reasons noted above in connection with claim 1.

Claim 22 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 as unpatentable over the combination of Kateley, Noel and Beck as applied to claim 1, further in view of U.S. 3,712,034 to Praca. Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Claim 22 depends from claim 1 and should be similarly patentable for the reasons noted above in connection with claim 1. Praca teaches a cylinder made of plastic used in harvesting equipment. However, it does not address the other deficiencies with respect to the original combination of references. Accordingly, claim 22 should also be patentable over this combination of references.

Claim 27 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 as unpatentable over the combination of Kateley, Noel and Beck as applied to claim 1, further in view of WO 01/87047. Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Claim 27 depends from claim 1 and should be similarly patentable for the reasons noted above in connection with claim 1. WO 01/87047 was cited as disclosing a

cylinder having a wiper mechanism extending over its length. However, it does not address the deficiencies noted above in connection with the original combination. Accordingly, withdrawal of the Section 103 rejection of claim 27 is respectfully requested.

Claims 30 and 31 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 as unpatentable over the combination of Kateley, Noel, Beck and Bou, as applied to Claim 18, further in view of U.S. 2003/0172639 to Calmer. Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Claims 30 and 31 ultimately depend from claim 1 and should be similarly patentable for the reasons noted above in connection with claim 1. Calmer is cited as showing a cut-out in a guide plate. However, it does not address the deficiencies noted above in connection with the original combination of references as applied to claim 1. Accordingly, withdrawal of the Section 103 rejection of claims 30 and 31 is respectfully requested.

Claims 35-39 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 as unpatentable over the combination of Kateley, Noel, Beck and Calmer. Claims 35-39 ultimately depend from claim 1 and should be similarly patentable for the reasons noted above in connection with claim 1. Calmer does not address the deficiencies noted in the original combination as applied to claim 1 and is only cited as disclosing a cover plate with a cut-out. In view of this, withdrawal of the Section 103 rejection of claims 35-39 is respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

If the Examiner believes that any additional minor formal matters need to be addressed in order to place the present application in condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned by telephone at the Examiner's convenience.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully submit that the present Application, including claims 1, 18, 22-35 and 37-40, is in condition for allowance, and a Notice to that effect is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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